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## **FIRST 5 TO DELIVER FREE PRESCHOOL TO NEARLY 1,000 SAN FRANCISCO KIDS**

*Enrollment will start for free, high-quality preschool programs in the Mission, Excelsior, Bayview and Visitacion Valley neighborhoods.*

SAN FRANCISCO – First 5 California Chair Rob Reiner, First 5 San Francisco and Mayor Gavin Newsom today announced the beginning of San Francisco’s Preschool For All program. Nearly 1,000 children will have the opportunity to attend free preschool at 22 high-quality preschool programs selected to participate in Preschool For All.

“This is a great day for the children of San Francisco. Now, more kids will have the opportunity to go to preschool, giving them a crucial jump-start on life,” said Rob Reiner, Chair of First 5 California. “And this is only the beginning. The people of San Francisco recognize the value of preschool and have made a commitment to expand Preschool For All so all 4-year-olds have a chance at a quality preschool experience.”

Families with 4-year-old children living in the Mission, Excelsior, Bayview and Visitacion Valley neighborhoods can receive enrollment information for the free preschool programs by calling (415) 354-3873. These communities were selected to begin Preschool For All because of the high concentration of young children living in the neighborhoods and the capacity of the providers in the area to provide services.

“Today’s launch represents a significant step toward Preschool For All in San Francisco,” said Moira Kenney, Executive Director of First 5 San Francisco. “Every child who enrolls in one of our Preschool For All programs is another child gaining valuable preschool experiences, preparing her for a lifetime of learning. We’re looking forward to building on our success and expanding across the city.”

Funding for Preschool For All comes from Proposition H, which was approved by San Francisco voters in March 2004 to fund education programs, including more than \$155 million over 10 years to make voluntary universal preschool accessible to all the county’s 4-year-olds.

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Prop. H designated First 5 San Francisco as the lead agency to develop and implement the comprehensive Preschool For All plan.

A total of \$3.3 million in Prop. H funds are initially available to begin implementing programs for the upcoming school year. Fifty-five early learning programs applied to receive Preschool For All funding in the four communities. The diverse group of high quality programs selected include school district child-development centers, Head Start programs, for-profit and not-for-profit child care centers, home-based centers and private preschools.

Parents are encouraged to enroll their children in the free part-day programs. Some of the programs opening this fall will also offer full day care for a fee. Preschool For All is free for all children who meet the eligibility requirements, regardless of family income. To be eligible, parents must reside in the Mission, Excelsior, Bayview or Visitacion Valley neighborhoods (zip codes 94110, 94112, 94124 and 94134) and children must be 4 years old by December 2, 2005.

Parents can receive enrollment information by calling (415) 354-3873. Additional information is available on the First 5 San Francisco Web site, [www.sfkids.org](http://www.sfkids.org). Information will be available in English, Spanish and Chinese.

Quality preschool gives children the tools and experiences they need to thrive in kindergarten and beyond. Children who attend quality preschools do better in reading and math, develop better social and emotional skills and have more self-confidence. They are also more likely to graduate from high school and go to college. A recent RAND Corporation report shows an investment in quality preschool for California's 4-year-olds benefits children academically and reduces costs associated with special education, grade retention and juvenile arrests.

### ***About First 5 San Francisco***

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years of life and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. First 5 San Francisco distributes approximately \$10 million in Prop. 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs.

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